The Stage

The Actors and the Plays before the Public Eye

ATTRACTIONS THIS WEEK.

Salt Lake Theater—Rose Coghlan in "The Greatest Thing in the World," Thursday and Friday.

Grand Theater—"Man's Enemy" first half of the week; "A Woman's Sacrifice," last half.

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Rose Coghlan will be at the Salt Lake Theater on Thursday and Friday in "The Greatest Thing in the World." This play is a study in mother love. The story, says the advance man, "portrays three romances, and through it all there runs the purpose to analyze the sentiments and emotions which may be awakened in a woman who is responsible to her Creator and her own better self for her son, who is a victim of a criminal inheritance. Rose Coghlan has scored a personal triumph in her fine performance of a delicate and most arduous part. A woman less confident of herself, less firmly convinced of what she meant to do, or lacking the artistic qualities possessed by Miss Coghlan, would have come to grief on a host of popular predispositions and prejudices. It is a great tribute to her art that she commands the unfaltering sympathies of her audience for the sentimental passion inspired and reciprocated by her widowed self as well as for the exposition of maternal love and care displayed toward her erring son."

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At the Grand the Elleford stock company will present this week "Man's Enemy" and "A Woman's Sacrifice." The first named play is a sensational comedy-drama. The story deals with both sides of life in the city of London, and the strong characters of the play give ample opportunity for dramatic force, while the location of the various scenes calls for special scenic effects. The story is one of much heart interest. The serious element is mingled with comedy, forming a strong combination. "Man's Enemy" will be presented Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, with a matinee Wednesday.

Thursday night "A Woman's Sacrifice" will be put on. This play is a society drama which has had much popularity.

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James K. Hackett has canceled his engagement at the Grand Theater, having decided not to make a visit to the coast.

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As Mansfield is to play "Ivan the Terrible" here when he comes next month, the following account, furnished by his press agent, of the experience with it when it was first put on in New York last winter is interesting: "To insure the success of his engagement in case appetite was not keen for 'Ivan the Terrible,' he framed a most attractive repertoire for the last two weeks of his four weeks' engagement. The sale opened. The first night of 'Ivan the Terrible' sold out instantly. For none of the other nights was there a particularly heavy sale. But the two weeks' repertoire began to sell like hot cakes. Mr. Mansfield's first night in 'Ivan' found nearly $20,000 advance sale, of which only $5000 was for the fortnight of 'Ivan the Terrible.' The first night was a revelation. 'Booth has his Hamlet, Irving had his Louis XI, and Mansfield has found his Ivan,' said one critic. The role as acted was adjudged Mansfield's masterpiece. The success was not one of mere critical estimation, the word passed from mouth to mouth, began to voice the praise of Mansfield's 'Ivan.' The line formed at the box office the morning after the great production was first revealed and it never broke day after day until the two weeks were sold out complete. The speculator had overlooked his opportunity. He might have commanded any price for seats. The project of extending the run of 'Ivan the Terrible' was broached, and here we discovered the ironical objection, there was no use changing the bill for the last two weeks for they, too, were all but sold out for every performance."

Rose Coghlan's Sad Experiences.

When Rose and Charles Coghlan left their home in a town adjacent to New York, to which they and their aged mother had moved from England, after the triumph of Rose on Broadway, the mother begged Rose to care for Charles, who was her youngest. At the same time she exacted a promise from Charles to write to her every day. Fortune was kind to both Charles and Rose. No first-class cast was complete without the brother or sister in New York or London. Charles kept his word loyally and wrote regularly to the little mother. Rose, too, kept her word to watch over the younger brother, and when the press of England and America was telling of the misdeed of the youngest of the Coghlan family, it was Rosemond Coghland who stepped into the breach and defended her brother at the cost of a $50,000 residence in New York and almost all her earnings.

Five years ago Charles Coghlan, then touring in "A Royal Box," was stricken with a mortal illness in Galveston, and was buried there. The mother was critically ill at the time. Rose was en tour, playing "Peg Woffington." Realizing that news of her favorite child's death would be a death blow to the mother, Rose Coghlan, whose chirography closely resembled that of Charles, wrote daily letters to a feeble, half-blind lady, then 80 years of age, signed, "Your devoted son, Charles." Only after her season on the road was done did Rose Coghlan reveal the truth to her mother. A year later came the Galveston tidal wave, which engulfed the living and disintered the dead. Charles Coghlan's body was carried away. Rose kept the knowledge of the fact from her mother, and offered a reward of $250 for the discovery of the body. A few weeks ago a casket was found, which was of the same make as that used to receive the remains of Charles Coghlan. Without investigation a resident of Galveston wired Rose Coghland, who was then in Dallas, Tex., that the body of Charles had been found. A week later, when she played in Galveston, the remains were identified as those of a New York man. And the aged mother is still in ignorance of the fact that the last resting place of her son is unknown.

Mr. Elleford's Experiences.

W. J. Elleford, proprietor of the company now playing a successful engagement at the Grand theater, came to Salt Lake last week from the coast. Mr. Elleford is one of the old timers in the show business in the West, and has a fund of interesting stories of his experiences.

"The execution of Rose in your city," he said yesterday, "recalls an incident of the early 80's in a Nevada mining camp where I was booked for one night. I got a letter from the local manager, asking if I couldn't change my date from March 8th to the 15th, as there was going to be a hanging and there would be a big crowd in town that day.

"We were playing a piece in a small town in Southern California. On the programme it stated in the synopsis that act three was the same as act one. A fellow and his girl who evidently came from the rural districts, went out after the second act and the man was overheard to say: 'We might as well go home now, the last act is just the same as the first and we don't want to see that again.'

"In Virginia City, a number of years ago, we were to present a thrilling melo-drama of border life. Our property plot, which was turned over to the local manager by our agent, called for 3 32 sure-fire revolvers. The local manager did not notice the division in the In the numbers and when the company arrived he told the property man of the show that he had secured everything but the 332 revolvers and that it was impossible to get more than 219 in the town that was in good condition."

Realism on the Stage.

Augustin Daly, the most forceful and intelligent theatrical manager of his generation, and I dare say of any time, if historical accounts can be used in present-day judgment, was a man of positive literary attainment, keenly perceptive in art, and a thorough student of dramatic qualities. He was, moreover, an able business man and a competent administrator. Perhaps his greatest weakness was in not always being able to adapt himself to pecuniary conditions. He was a genius and an artist—he made artists—and it was not to be expected that he could keep his money-drawer with the same iron-like politeness and merciless grasp as the corporate "business man." Sometimes he "grabbed at the spigot and let go the bunghole," as he said to me one day when mourning over the lack of appreciation of the really true and beautiful.

"Most of the people are quite as well satisfied with veneer," said Mr. Daly. "Then," I returned, "why the expense of going any deeper if you are the only one who can see it?" This was all apropos of the production of the "Two Escutcheons," in which a real parquetry flooring that cost several hundred dollars was used in the drawing-room scene. It did not produce the effect that Mr. Daly wished. But the polish of it set off the women's gowns as well as the furniture; and although it was very difficult for Miss Rehan to glide about on it with all the ease she would wish, and although George Clarke came near executing a double somersault on several occasions, yet the parquetry flooring served a very good purpose. It was an evidence of Mr. Daly's conscientious care for detail and thoroughness. When Mr. Daly bought anything for stage decoration it was generally the real thing.—Deshler Welch, in Booklovers Magazine.

Mrs. Fiske on Ibsen.

As Mrs. Fiske has done perhaps more than any other actress in this country to make Ibsen understood, some of her expressions on this author will be of interest. In the course of a talk in San Francisco on Ibsen she said:

"The play without psychology does not interest me. The play that merely tells a story, without thought behind it, is impossible after Ibsen. 'Mary of Magdala' I like for its spiritual qualities—the uplifted soul of the woman in that tense situation of the fourth act. Spirituality appeals to women more than to men, I think. But I like the modern play with thought behind its spoken lines; the play that exacts psychological research from its actors; the play that comes from the modern mind to the modern mind.

"I still hold that Ibsen might, if only for once, select a subject of sweetness and light, and that he has had a bad influence on his followers—other dramatists. But the imitation is different from the real. In fact, the imitation only goes to show how great the original is. Think of it! Ibsen has revolutionized the drama in every country in the world. The peoples do not realize this, because they see very little of Ibsen and a great deal of the Ibsen dilutions. Ibsen is just commencing to come into his own. He is going through the crisis, as Wagner did. It is my belief that the great repertoire of the great players of the future will be the plays of Shakespeare and of Ibsen. Surely there will be the Ibsen repertoire, just as there is now the Shakespeare repertoire. Actors will not be able to escape from the spell of the Ibsen characters. These characters fascinate, they lure you to study, they bring you closer to life. And though the life pictured by Ibsen is dark and tragic, it is so pitiably true that no one need ask where the moral is. Ibsen's truths are merciless."

Mrs. Fiske also expressed a wish that America had "a great theater" for Shakespeare and Ibsen—meaning not especially a great theater building, but a company of great artists. "Think," said she, "of being able to bring together a band of players of equal rank with the singers of the Metropolitan Opera-house! Call it a national theater, if you like; I should not care what it was called, so long as we could organize such a company. Think where it would place the United States in the world of dramatic art!" Mrs. Fiske said that to help such a project she would do anything in her power, and added: "This isn't the idea of a visionary, a dreamer. Apart from the artistic benefit to the country, it would be a good business venture. It would pay as well as the opera, if not better. There could be stockholders to back it and subscribers to support it, as there are at the Metropolitan Opera-house. There must be a solid backing, to insure the actors, many of whom, stars, would be compelled to give up profitable tours, against loss. But if I were honored by being asked to play in such a company, I should gladly play without a guarantee of any kind, just taking an actor's share of the profits. And this is neither enthusiasm nor nobility nor foolishness on my part. I say it merely to show my confidence in the financial success of the undertaking. As things are nowadays in the theater, we never see a really good dramatic performance. I mean that always there are one or more players that are not thoroughly fitted to their parts—they are out of tune. No good conductor would think of leading an orchestra in which there was a single instrument out of tune. He must have and does have trained musicians capable of giving the precise value of every note in the score. But in our casts of today, be they never so small, there is always at least one actor out of tune."

James Corrigan of the Elleford Co., Now Playing at the Grand Theater.

The Way Londoners Boo Plays.

The ardor and the personal note in the pittite's devotion make him a conservative of the conservatives. For long years he stupidly stood for a constant diet of plays stolen, or otherwise come by, from the French, propitiated by the most superficial "adaptation," and the name of an Englishman as the author in the playbill. But let an American play up on the Strand or the Haymarket, and, leaguered with his humbler relative, the god, he does his best to boo it into failure. Three years ago Mr. Gillette and his "Sherlock Holmes" were booed; then came Mr. Augustus Thomas's "Arizona," and Mr. Clyde Fitch's "The Climbers"—all good and successful pieces of their kind. The right to applaud involves the right to boo, granted freely! What one objects to—to vary a saying of Chevalier's—is not so much the boo he boos, as the nawsty ways he boos it. Throughout the evening he permits the partisans of author and actor to applaud as they will. He even abets them in applauding. He is busy, meantime, passing the word along from shoulder to shoulder. At the end, when actor and author are called before the curtain, the cave of the winds breaks forth. The poor victim, with his neatly prepared speech of modesty and gratitude, waits for the booing to stop, trusting that his friends will again assert themselves. From time to time he tries to make his words of modesty and gratitude heard above the uproar. They have him now where they want him, and they take the step that divides the booer from the boor. Every time the speech of modesty and gratitude rises to the author's lips the flood of boos again surges over his unhappy head, until he storms at his tormentors in impotent fury, or is routed from the stage. The chivalry of the pit is no greater than its sense of sportsmanlike fair play. Some years ago Mrs. Craigie (John Oliver Hobbes) was betrayed into attempting a first-night speech. In fairness it should be stated that the offense of her being an American was aggravated by the fact that her comedy was too thin, and the applause of her friends too thick. But yet she was a woman, and she was booed off the stage.—From "Play-Going in London" by John Corbin in the April Scribner's.

Patti Is Pleased.

The ease and comfort of her voyage home—the passage was a smooth one, and a cabin de luxe affords the perfection of travel—have restored to Baroness Cederstrom her wonted good humor. The angry frown that cleft her brows when she gazed back toward the Narrows and exclaimed to herself that her farewell tour had indeed been made, disappeared by the time she reached the other side. She is now in her castle in Wales, to which she was joyously welcomed by her glad peasantry, who already feel jingling in their pockets part of the money despoiled from the Philistine Americans—her face all smiles and her talk full of pleasant, prattling reminiscence. Mark Tapley was never more jolly. If things happened which were disagreeable, like Webster she has used philosophy and forgotten them. The sputtering feud is over; the wounds to her amour propre are either healed, or else, vanity gushing up in a different guise, she is resolved to conceal their presence.

Her tour, she has told the London newspapers, was a most glorious success. The audiences were delighted and delightful—often would not let her stop singing, and pursued her with exultant shouts when she was driving from the hall—"they would not desist," she says, "until they were told that I had gone." It appears that the numerous cancellations which occurred on the tour were not due to lack of quantity but of quality of audience. "I sang at forty concerts at which we could get the right sort of audiences," she says, and adds, "I would not go to the other towns." Doubtless the "towns" which did not hear Patti will feel duly rebuked. Everything was lovely, says the diva—heaps of flowers, piles of presents, and completest satisfaction. It is not set down, however, in the London newspapers that Mme. Patti illustrated her talk with the photographs of local and other managers, showing the delight with which they paid her guaranties.—New York Globe.

Scenery, Not Literature.

The American exploitation of "Parsifal" appears to have renewed the interest in what is called the religious drama. There are now "Parsifal" plays and plays that deal less mystically with sacred subjects. It is to be noted that they are all spectacular. Biblical incidents are used as the basis of many. The impression seems to be general, putting aside all question of ethics and reverence in the matter, that the Biblical play cannot depend upon the basic simplicity of the Biblical story for its appeal. It must, to the contrary, be surrounded by tinsel and paint, and made garish with ludicrous costumes, to attract and hold the attention of the public to which the appeal is made.

When the greedy managers cast eyes in the direction of "Parsifal" their minds instantly conceived a spectacular dramatic production; when "Ben Hur" was transferred from the pages of Gen. Wallace's book every effort was bent toward making a mechanical device the center of interest. When Mrs. Fiske chose to present an adaptation of "Mary of Magdala," the first, but fortunately not the whole, thought was given to the scenic investiture. And, no later than last week, when a young player with more money than talent staged the story of David under the title "The Shepherd King," his interest promoters laid particular and insistent stress upon the elaborateness of the mounting.

The reason for this is plain. The Bible spectacle is a snare wherein the author's hope is to hide the flimsiness and impotency of his handling of a great theme in a mass of painted canvas and behind a row of shining spears.

The true religious play is yet a problem. The spectacles that have been presented in a majority of instances have depended not upon the great human themes developed at the inception of the Christian religion, but upon the incongruous and painfully crude attempts at exterior dressing. And these, far from awaking reverence or inflaming churchly opposition, do no more than to excite a generous pity and a healthy contempt for all concerned.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Fitch Writes Musical Comedy.

Charles Frohman and Clyde Fitch are to meet in Paris and when their conference is over the name of a new play just finished by Mr. Fitch will have been decided upon.

The play to be named is a departure for Mr. Fitch, in that it is a musical comedy. It is intended to be a tuneful satire on the conditions that now exist in this city among the people who think they are "in society," but are only wealthy.

The principal parts have been written to be played by Miss Hattie Williams and Sam Bernard. The role that Mr. Bernard is to play has been modelled on the personality of a well known New York club member of festive proclivities. Miss Williams is to impersonate a well known comic opera actress. To do it she will wear a blonde wig.—New York Herald.

Embryo Authors' Pieces.

Chattering the other day about encounters with embryo dramatic authors, the manager of a stock company in New York had this to say:

"I have from three to five applicants a week from people who declare that they have written a modern masterpiece. Easily the oddest experience was with an old woman, who in some manner learned that my office could be reached, from the auditorium. She purchased an admission ticket, and the first I knew she was seated in a chair by my desk as I looked up from my writing.

"She explained that she had a manuscript of a melodrama in rhymed verse. It was the first of a new school of dramatic writing. She read part of one act before I could get her out of the office on my promise to read it over.

"The piece would have run about an hour and a half. The first three acts were poor melodrama. In the fourth, with no warning whatever, all the characters were transported to fairyland. She came back the next day to explain that she wrote it that way because she thought I might like to introduce a ballet.

"I made the last act an excuse for declining the piece. A week later she came back with a new last act, which she left with me. Two days later I received a note, in which she requested the return of the manuscript, as she was convinced that her mission would best be served by the posthumous production of her works, of which there were ninety-seven. It was well for her peace of mind, poor soul, that she reached that conclusion. She was happy in her work and there could be no more disappointment."

PLAYS AND PLAYERS.

Thomas W. Ross, who has been in "Checkers" so successfully, was for the ten years preceding his debut last fall in that play a member of the chief stock companies throughout the country. He began his career with the old Boston museum, and his principal engagements were with the Pittsburg, Kansas City, Salt Lake and Denver stock companies. He played a new role every week, and in the ten years of such experiences he appeared in over 300 different characters. Ross is still in his twenties.

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"Light opera has degenerated into vaudeville," declares Miss Marie Tempest. "The score is no score at all, but three or four musicians' expressions hitched together. There is a jumble of everything and any old thing, as you say in America. The thing is impossible and artificial. Why it amuses the dear delightful public, I'm blessed if I know."

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Frank Daniels has been booked for an all-summer run in Chicago, commencing April 25th. Mr. Daniels has been unable to cover one-half of the available territory with "The Office Boy," and will therefore use it next season.

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When Madge Carr Cook was playing the role of Mrs. Wiggs in "Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch" in Louisville, she asked Alice Hegan Rice what particular "Mrs. Wiggs" sketch was the nucleus of her famous creation. Mrs. Rice replied that the account of the "theayter party" was the first thing from her pen in which her now familiar character made her first bow.

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While discussing the improvements in stage lighting recently, Henry Irving described the efforts of old-time actors to keep in the "focus" or glow cast by the lamps which were once used as footlights, and illustrated his meaning by an amusing story of Edmund Kean, who one night played Othello with more than his usual intensity. An admirer who met him in the street the next day was loud in his congratulations. "I really thought you would have choked Iago, Mr. Kean—you seemed so tremendously in earnest." "In earnest!" said the tragedian; "I should think so! Hang the fellow; he was trying to keep me out of focus!"

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After four performances, George Alexander withdrew "Love's Carnival" at the St. James Theater, London. The piece was adapted from the German, dealt with the checkered love story of a gentleman for a woman of humble station, and ended as the pair left the scene to commit suicide. The play was received with noisy manifestations of disapproval during the first performance.